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**JACK ANDERSON**

## State Officials Lobby Against Aid to Afghans

For almost two decades, the United States was portrayed on the world's television screens and front pages as the big, bad aggressor in Vietnam. Never mind that no U.S. troops ever invaded North Vietnam, never mind that North Vietnamese troops trespassed regularly into Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam. Hanoi's lean revolutionaries were rhapsodized in the press.

In stark contrast, the brutal Soviet conquest of Afghanistan has been all but ignored by the world press. Did you know, for example, that the Soviets have been carpet-bombing Afghan areas under guerrilla control? A single Tupolev-16 Badger bomber can dump nine tons of bombs. They fall in a close, deadly pattern, creating a carpet of explosions. One village after another has been obliterated.

This annihilation is only the latest cruelty that the Soviets have visited upon the Afghan people. The invaders have caused incalculable misery in this bleak land, massacring recalcitrant villagers and poisoning their wells. A terrible catastrophe has befallen the brave, hardy Afghans.

Yet except for a few reports, the story has gone untold. Editors have failed to grasp the magnitude of the Soviet crimes in Afghanistan; reporters haven't confronted Soviet officials; columnists haven't elaborated on the ramifications.

The cruel facts should have been laid out on the front pages until mass opinion cried out against the Soviet excesses. Yet these facts have been largely discarded or ignored in news rooms around the world.

In my journalist's presumption, I have tried to influence public opinion by sounding several alarms. I sent a reporter to Afghanistan to bring me a firsthand report. He grew a full, Afghan-style beard, dressed in native robes and crossed five mountain ranges with the guerrillas.

The resulting columns inspired Neal Blair, an indefatigable champion of lost causes, to form the Federation for American Afghan Action, which has raised money and shipped supplies to the Afghan resistance.

It has also sent Andrew Eiva, a West Point graduate and former Green Beret, on four trips into Afghanistan. He found that the arms reaching the freedom fighters are incredibly poor. Some kill more Afghans than Soviets, he said. And invariably, the good weapons are short of ammunition. "The current level of aid is a condemnation to a slow death," he reported.

Meanwhile, Neal Blair's stalwarts,

skilled in the ways and rhythms of exerting pressure, have taken their plea to Congress. In response, Sen. Paul E. Tsongas (D-Mass.) and Rep. Don Ritter (R-Pa.) have introduced legislation calling for effective U.S. aid for the Afghan resistance.

This has the endorsement of President Reagan. But behind the president's back, the State Department has been lobbying against the legislation. One official, Howard B. Schaffer, urged the Senate Foreign Relations Committee behind closed doors to water down or eliminate the bill. Apparently, the State Department doesn't want to antagonize the Soviets—who, as I recall, never hesitated to pour arms into Vietnam for use against American troops.

Meanwhile, the Afghan guerrillas are continuing their resistance with more courage than weapons. The legendary mujaheddin commander, Ahmed Shah Massoud, has succeeded in uniting diverse factions and has stopped the seventh Soviet offensive against his forces.

With pitiful firepower, he has fought a hit-and-run war against Soviet troops, which are heavily backed by armored vehicles, helicopter gunships, jet fighters and bombers.

They have been no match for Massoud's elusive mountain fighters. He is known in the rugged back country as "the lion of Panjshir." But without claws, the lion cannot withstand many more assaults.